

# Case Study

## CYPHER Learning



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- ✓ Review by a Real User
- ✓ Verified by PeerSpot

### What is our primary use case?

I am a computer science teacher and I use it to help facilitate my class. I'm not a typical "sage on the stage" teacher, I'm more like a "guide on the side." I use CYPHER Learning to fully implement my curriculum for my students.

### How has it helped my organization?

Automation helps save time when it comes to the assessment of assignments. I can set up some assignments so that the platform automatically grades students. I can spend more time developing content and not so much time grading. Taking the time to set it up properly helps with that automation, and the students get immediate feedback so they know exactly how well they've done. I can then look at the

analytics, once they've done those assignments, and gauge who's doing well and who needs a little bit more help. It's very important and helpful.

I throw in a survey-type self-assessment for my students. I can go through each lesson and I can see how well they think they did versus how their actual grade matches up. I can identify students or classes to go back to and say, "Maybe we're going to take a little bit more time on this content." I can do that one-on-one or in a small group as well. It's essential in helping me to identify who needs help or who's ready for more advanced lessons or assignments.

CYPHER Learning is also very efficient when it comes to helping me understand how well my students understand concepts, by using the assessments, analytics, and feedback. My students can interact with me within the system



to let me know if they have questions. I can engage with them as they're working and field questions or clear up anything that they may have an issue with.

Another benefit of the platform is classroom management. When my students know exactly what they need to be doing, it cuts down on the extra time that could lead to poor classroom management. It's all about them buying in at the beginning and getting my students to invest in the system. They know what they're supposed to be doing. CYPHER Learning has been very beneficial in that way.

An aspect that is also extremely important is the fact that teachers can track student progress on a competency basis through a mastery grid. As an organization, that's one of the things our administrators look for when they come into the room, the objectives and the competencies, and what teachers are doing to help students achieve competencies with their pedagogy in the classroom.

CYPHER Learning helps me to provide self-pacing for students in my class. Because the system enables me to add videos and resources such as PDFs, a lot of that content is in the video, so they don't have to go to outside sources. I can take care of those students who are proficient by giving them those materials, and that allows them to move along at their own pace. And for those students who need extra time on things, I have that time to spend with them while others move ahead. It helps me to reach everybody.

The system also helps reduce administrative work because it offers analytics and spreadsheet downloads. If I need to see grades for students, I can see them all at once or pull grade reports for individual students. I can look at individual grades from the different classes that I've set up that cover different competencies. I can print all of that out and share it with parents. Everything is right at your fingertips.

There are cost savings because it's all digital. There's really no need for printing. I can convert documents to PDFs or do videos. It really helps because it's online. I have to be out of school tomorrow, but I don't have to make copies of things for students or the substitute teacher. I just outline what my students are doing online and the substitute and the students know exactly what they need to be doing.

## What is most valuable?

The mastery grid CYPHER Learning is the most important feature. With my curriculum, in Mississippi, we are required to keep up and track as our students master specific objectives and standards. With CYPHER Learning, that process is built-in. I can customize it to my liking, and I have all of that data right at my fingertips. It's amazing.

Similarly, the competency-based learning is also extremely important because, with my curriculum, in the state of Mississippi, funding is a key factor. We have to keep up with how well



our students are doing on specific competencies and standards. I've got all of the data and the system backs it up. It's very critical. Tagging assignments with competencies goes along with the mastery feature. When I'm looking at that mastery list, I can see assignments, lessons, a group of lessons, or a specific quiz I have tagged and I can immediately see which assessments match specific competencies and determine if I need to change things up or develop something a little bit more.

Gamification is another feature that I've recently really gotten into and I have found that my students really enjoy getting points and badges. That reinforcement is critical. One of the things that my school stresses is positive reinforcement for our students. With gamification, my students get that instant gratification. They get specific scores when they do specific tasks within CYPHER Learning and it lets them know. It's a really big motivator for my students.

The gamification aspect is extremely easy to use, as long as you have an idea of what you want to do. The system is very intuitive and you just create your game and your points. Another thing I like about it is that you can retroactively add points for something. You might think, "Hey, I want to give points for a specific task that has already been done." You can go back, create that point system or badge, and it will retroactively award the student who's already done that assignment as well as capture those who have yet to begin.

It's also very easy for students to use gamified learning materials. They just do the work; what they would already be doing. It doesn't take any extra effort for them to be involved in it because it's built into the assignments or the lessons. As long as they're doing their work and engaging with the system, they are rewarded for their participation.

And the reward automation is a time-saver for me. It's a set-it-and-forget-it feature. The system continues working after you set it up and you know that the students will be rewarded. The system is going to make sure that the students are aware that they are participating in it.

The platform is also really good in terms of integrations with other technologies. I use and integrate a lot of video content, with SCORM features, to create automated assignments. There are other websites out there, but CYPHER Learning makes it possible to have everything in-house for me and my students. It's a one-stop shop.

I'm able to manage all of my needs for all of my students on my own. From year-to-year, as I create content, I am able to tweak things or reuse assignments, which cuts down on the amount of time I have to spend on preparing.

## What needs improvement?

While the number of apps available for integration with CYPHER Learning has increased over the years, I would love to see this number continue to grow. I believe this would help



solidify its position amongst other learning management systems as a viable option for educators and schools.

## For how long have I used the solution?

I've been using CYPHER LEARNING since 2010 or 2011.

## What do I think about the scalability of the solution?

I'm extremely impressed, from year to year, with the things that they are doing as far as keeping up with how the platform should look and what it should offer. It's always ahead of where other LMSs are.

## How are customer service and support?

They have been very responsive to my needs. There is an online support system that you go to if you're having an issue.

## How would you rate customer service and support?

Positive

## How was the initial setup?

The initial setup was completely straightforward. When I began using CYPHER Learning it was as simple as getting the URL and sharing it with my students. I don't think it could get any simpler than that. Because I'm in a computer lab, I have my students save that web address in a bookmark.

There is minimal maintenance. For any issues that are encountered, CYPHER LEARNING is very responsive.

## What was our ROI?

I have absolutely seen a return on investment. It shows students their percentage of completion and I'm getting more students to do more work. They see what they have to do. They'll say, "I'm at this percentage of completion, and this is my mastery so far." The buy-in is worth it to get that from students.

## What's my experience with pricing, setup cost, and licensing?

Some of the previous solutions I used were free, but I feel that it's worth it to pay for CYPHER Learning and get that autonomy and creativity and personalization. I feel that students want and need something that is not just the status quo. They want to be able to engage with something that speaks to them, so they're not



just trying to check a box on an objective. It actually gets them involved in the process of learning. It gets a student to say, "Ok, this is something I have to do, but I'm really enjoying what I have to do. I get to interact with my teacher and with other students." That was something that some of the other platforms were lacking.

The pricing is worth the peace of mind that it gives teachers, due to the ability to create an experience for their students. It's not just about the assignments they have to do. Teachers can create a narrative and a direction for their students and have them immersed in that environment. Learning is something that all students have to do, but why not make it fun? Why not be able to offer an experience that is engaging and that allows them to participate and add to that narrative?

## Which other solutions did I evaluate?

I had worked with several different LMSs because, in the state of Mississippi, when you're going to teach my specific subject, you go through training on different LMS platforms. I found that a lot was lacking in those platforms and that CYPHER Learning gives me more autonomy, creativity, and personalization in my class compared to Blackboard, Google Classroom, or Moodle. Now, the state of Mississippi uses Canvas, but I still prefer to use CYPHER Learning.

One of the main things that I really loved when I initially started out with CYPHER Learning was that it was different from everything else out there. They keep up the user interface and it's like an encompassing community for my students. That way, they're not having to go to a lot of different websites for much of what they're doing. I can set it up to minimize distractions and the need to go to different websites to do assignments.

Also, CYPHER Learning serves as an extension of myself, my teaching philosophy, and the experiences that I want to give to my students. When they're working through a lesson, in a sense, they're sitting down and working with me personally, and that's something that I strive to do ahead of time. It may take a few extra minutes, and maybe hours, upfront, to capture that opportunity for my students to be working with me, but it's worth it. So the platform is just an extension of me and I'm able to get all the creativity out there and encourage my students to be as creative in how they interact and engage. I can promote the joy of learning.

Another factor was ease of use. A lot of the other platforms that I used didn't have the intuitiveness that I have with CYPHER Learning. It made me want to explore and use as many features as possible to get the most out of it for my students.

## What other advice do I have?

I feel that CYPHER Learning is always ahead of



the curve when it comes to educational technology. It's really helpful that they have a roadmap of things that they are looking to implement. They're keeping up with the trends in education. And we are also able to provide feedback directly to them. They're constantly working to improve the platform. I couldn't ask for anything more specific because I feel they're already on top of it. But if there were something that they needed to add, they're always open to suggestions.

My advice would be to look into the ability that CYPHER Learning offers for teachers to create their own paths for their students; the autonomy, creativity, and personalization provided by CYPHER Learning. Also, consider the automation and being able to create content or assessments that work for you and don't add to your time. There are only so many hours in the day for educators, administrators, or people in the industry. It's a platform that works with you to see you through to the goals that you envision.

CYPHER Learning houses everything I need to function, day-to-day, in my classroom.

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